



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2016

No. 144

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, protector of nations in a turbulent world when we know not what a day will bring forward, we look to You, our help in ages past and our hope for the years to come.

Today, we ask that You would use our lawmakers as agents of reconciliation and justice. May their labors hasten the day when justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

We thank You, O God, that even during seasons of challenge and unrest, we have the calm assurance of Your presence. Even in the valley of the shadows, we find comfort because You are with us.

Lord, forgive us for the many times we have failed to humble ourselves and pray and seek Your face and turn from evil so that You will hear our prayers, forgive our sins, and heal our land. We praise You that the best is yet to come for this great land, and we anticipate Your providence enabling us to be blessed beyond anything we can ask or imagine.

We pray in Your wonderful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELLER). The Senator from Pennsylvania.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1831

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise this morning to speak on S. 1831, the Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act, also known as the PACT Act. This is a bipartisan bill.

I thank my colleague Senator BLUMENTHAL for coauthoring this and the 33 cosponsors I have.

This is a commonsense bill. This is the first Federal law that would protect all animals from torture, maiming, and abuse. The PACT Act allows Federal law enforcement to intervene when this kind of abuse occurs where the Federal Government has jurisdiction, on Federal property, in U.S. territories, and in relation to interstate commerce.

The act specifically bans the most appalling forms of animal abuse. It is often known as crushing. This is when a deranged individual actually tortures and sometimes sexually assaults household pets for some perverse enjoyment that they get. There are people who are in the business of soliciting animals over the Internet so they can conduct this appalling activity and then sell the images. It is unbelievable, but it happens.

This legislation is not controversial. Stopping this kind of obscene animal abuse is not controversial at all. There are no Republicans objecting to this legislation. The next Democratic leader on the other side is a cosponsor. Senator SCHUMER is a cosponsor of this legislation. There are 27 Democratic cosponsors. Over half of the Democratic caucus are cosponsors of this legislation, and a majority of House Members have cosponsored companion legislation. We worked with all of the relevant committees to make sure all concerns were addressed. It has been endorsed by every major animal welfare organization, including the Humane Society, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the Animal Welfare Insti-

tute. We worked with agricultural and sporting groups. There is no organized opposition to this at all.

This legislation is necessary because there are many hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of cases of this kind of horrific abuse of animals occurring every year. We have seen appalling cases. I will submit for the record examples that are too appalling to discuss. Frankly, it is just that bad, and we need to bring this to an end.

It is also important for me to briefly point out that academic research has found a very strong correlation between people who abuse animals and then subsequently commit violent crimes against human beings. This has been documented by the National Institute of Mental Health. They say that a history of sexually assaulting animals is the single largest risk factor and strongest predictor of increased risk of committing child sexual abuse.

A 2013 Northeastern University study found that half of all school shooters had harmed animals before harming humans. It is very clear that if we can stop people from this appalling abuse of animals, we will also be protecting human beings, and that is why law enforcement agencies endorse my legislation as well. The PACT Act is endorsed by the National Sheriffs' Association, Fraternal Order of Police, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, and nearly 200 local law enforcement agencies.

As I have said, this is a very simple issue. It is not confusing or complicated, and it is not controversial. Animals are not adequately protected across America. Many of our constituents feel very strongly and passionately about this issue, as well they should. Passage of this legislation will help protect people as well as animals, and Congress should act on this legislation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. 1831 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration;

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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